

Magazin für ev.=luth. Homiletik und Pastoraltheologie.

HOMILETIC MAGAZINE.

51. Jahrgang.

Mai 1927.

Nr. 5.

Zum 350jährigen Jubiläum der Konkordienformel.

Matth. 10, 32. 33.

Nota: Will man das 350jährige Gedächtnis der Verabfassung und Annahme der Konkordienformel begehen, so mache man sich beizeiten an die Arbeit und studiere die *Triglotta*. Die Sache ist es wert.

a. „Wir glauben, lehren und bekennen, daß die einige Regel und Richtschnur, nach welcher zugleich alle Lehren und Lehrer gerichtet und geurteilt werden sollen, sind allein die prophetischen und apostolischen Schriften Alten und Neuen Testaments.“ (*Trigl.*, S. 778. M., S. 517 bis 519.) Das ist das Bekenntnis unserer teuren lutherischen Kirche in bezug auf die Quelle, Regel und Richtschnur unsers Glaubens: *Sola Scriptura!* Ps. 119, 105; Gal. 1, 8. — b. Weil jedoch je und je falsche Lehrer in der Christenheit aufgetreten sind, die ihre Irrlehren aus der Schrift zu beweisen vorgaben, so hat die christliche Kirche von alters her ihr Bekenntnis der Wahrheit in sogenannten Symbolen oder Kennzeichen zum Ausdruck gebracht. Das Apostolische, Nizäische und Athanasianische Bekenntnis. (*Trigl.*, 778. M., 517—519.) — c. Als später die Papstkirche, obwohl sie sich zu diesen Symbolen bekannte, ihre ungezählten Irrlehren ausbreitete, sahen sich unsere Väter genötigt, die Wahrheit der Schrift in neuen Symbolen zum Ausdruck zu bringen. Augsburgerische Konfession, Apologie, die Schmalkaldischen Artikel. Zu diesen fügten sie die „Laienbibel“, Luthers Katechismus, hinzu. — d. Doch der Teufel ruhte nicht. Nach Luthers Tod versuchte er das ganze Werk Luthers zu vernichten und die von ihm bekannte Lehre auszuwurzeln. Das verbot Gott, indem er fromme, unerschrockene und bekenntnistreue Männer erweckte, die „Gottes Wort und Luthers Lehr“ frei verkündigten, einerseits gegen die Römischen, andererseits gegen die Calvinisten (Kryptocalvinisten). Nachdem sie die Feinde besiegt hatten, faßten sie die angegriffenen Lehren in ein neues Bekenntnis zusammen, indem sie die Wahrheit verteidigten und die Irrlehren abwiesen. Dieses Bekenntnis heißt Konkordienformel, die am 29. Mai 1577, also vor 350 Jahren, zuerst fertiggestellt und von den Führern der

lutherischen Kirche unterzeichnet wurde. Wir wollen an diesem wichtigen Ereignis nicht spurlos vorübergehen, sondern in diesem Gedächtnisgottesdienst dieses so wichtigen Buches gedenken. Laßt mich euch vor Augen halten

Die Konkordienformel ein herrliches Bekenntnis Jesu Christi.

1. Was dieses herrliche Bekenntnis so nötig machte;
2. was es enthält; 3. wie wichtig es für uns ist.

1.

A. a. Wir wollen zunächst auf die Umstände achten, die dieses so herrliche Bekenntnis nötig machten. Die Textesworte: „Wer mich bekennet vor den Menschen“ usw. Unser Heiland fordert, daß wir ihn bekennen sollen; wer ihn nicht bekennet, wird auch nicht von ihm als sein Jünger anerkannt. Allezeit sollen wir den Heiland und sein Wort bekennen; besonders aber wenn Feinde auftreten und sein Wort schmähen. — b. Das geschah gleich nach Luthers Tod. 1. Der Schmalkaldische Krieg; das Interim. (*Trigl.*, Einleitung, S. 93—102.) Nota: Man fasse die wichtigsten Ereignisse kurz zusammen; weise aber auch auf Melancthons Wankelmütigkeit hin. 2. Die Lehrstreitigkeiten. (*Trigl.*, Einl., S. 102—235.) Nota: Man sehe ab von den vielen Personen, die in Frage kommen, betone aber eingehend die Lehrpunkte, um die es sich hierbei handelte. Vgl. auch die Einleitung in J. T. Müllers Ausgabe. Hervorzuheben sind besonders die Irrlehren, die in den Artikeln I, II, III, IV, VII, VIII und XI abgewiesen werden, obwohl alle zu berühren sind.

B. a. Welch ein Angriff Satans und der Hölle auf die Wahrheit des Evangeliums! Und die Führer, die Großen, wurden zum Teil wankelmütig! — b. Aber Gott hielt seine schützende Hand über die von Luther wieder lauter und rein gelehrte Wahrheit. Die Reformation war Gottes Werk; ebenso auch die Erhaltung der Reformation. (*Trigl.*, S. 235—256.) Nota: Die Verabfassung der Konkordienformel war nicht übereilt. Man weise die langsame Entwicklung, die ernste Prüfung, die durchgreifende Korrektur nach. — c. So hat Gott uns durch seine edlen Werkzeuge dieses herrliche Bekenntnis geschenkt. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

2.

A. Was enthält nun dieses Bekenntnis? Prüfung der Lehren nach der Epitome. (*Trigl.*, S. 778—843.) 1. Von der Erbsünde. Beachte die Definition, S. 780, 3. 2. Vom freien Willen. Dieses Kapitel ist nach Lehre und Gegenlehre eingehend zu besprechen. 3. Von der Gerechtigkeit des Glaubens vor Gott. Beachte: die Zentrallehre von der Rechtfertigung aus Gnaden um Christi willen! 4. Von guten Werken. Wie gründlich lehrt unsere teure Kirche, daß, wo Glaube ist, auch die Früchte des Glaubens sich zeigen müssen! Aber auf der andern

Seite auch die *sola gratia*. 5. und 6. Vom Gesetz und Evangelium. Die schreckliche Vermischung in der römischen Kirche und bei den Sekten! 7. Vom heiligen Abendmahl. 8. Von der Person Christi. Man greife frisch die Reformierten an, auch die Fundamentalisten. 9. Von der Höllefahrt Christi. 10. Von Kirchengebräuchen. Christliche Freiheit und Bekenntnis! 11. Von der Vorsehung und Wahl Gottes. Sehr zeitgemäß! 12. Von andern Kotten und Sekten. Man beziehe sich auf den Unflath in unserm Lande!

B. a. Was sind das für Lehren? Sind es Grubeleien der Gelehrten? — b. Katechismuswahrheiten sind es! — c. Gott sei Dank für diese unaussprechliche Gabe!

3.

A. Wie wichtig dieses herrliche Bekenntnis für uns ist. a. Die Macht und Entfaltung der Papstkirche. — b. Das Umsichgreifen der Sekten. — c. Der Indifferentismus in der eigenen Mitte. — d. Die Unlust, Gottes Wort zu hören, zu lernen, zu bekennen. Text!

B. Die Konfordinformel ist ein Bekenntnis der Wahrheit. a. Darum sollen wir sie lesen, studieren, besprechen. 1. In Gemeindeversammlungen. 2. Privatim: Unsere *Triglotta* in Pfarrhaus, Kirche und Schule. 3. In der Walthertliga, in Bibelklassen. 2 Petr. 3, 18; 1, 8. — b. Darum sollen wir uns dieses Bekenntnisses nicht schämen. Text. Merger: „Die Augsburgerische Konfession genügt.“ — c. Darum sollen wir Gott für dieses herrliche Bekenntnis sowie für den Segen, den es gestiftet hat, herzlich danken.

„Wir können des gewiß sein, daß, solange man in diesen und andern Landen, Kirchen und Schulen über diesem Bekenntnis und Erklärung, so in dem christlichen Konfordinbuch verfaßt, halten wird, so lange werde auch Richtigkeit in Gottes Wort oder in der Lehre ohne Schwärmerei neben anderm Segen Gottes bei uns sein und bleiben; sobald aber von demselben rechten Bekenntnis wird im geringsten abgesehen werden, daß auch Gott, der uns diese große Wohlthat noch zuletzt erwiesen hat, von uns absehen und allerlei Lästerung und Schwärmerei unter uns einreißen lassen werde.“ (D. N. Selnecker.) J. T. M.

Predigt über Hebr. 11, 1.

Was ist der Glaube? Was ist der wahre, seligmachende Glaube? Das ist eine gar wichtige Frage. Denn auf den Glauben kommt nach Gottes Wort alles an. „Ohne Glauben ist's unmöglich, Gott gefallen“, sagt der Apostel; und der Prophet Jeremias sagt zu Gott: „Herr, deine Augen sehen nach dem Glauben.“

Will ein Mensch von Gott etwas erbitten, so ist es nicht damit getan, daß er die Hände faltet, die Knie beugt und einige oder viele Worte macht, sondern es kommt darauf an, daß er im Glauben betet.

Denn Christus spricht: „Alles, was ihr bittet im Gebet, so ihr glaubet, so werdet ihr's empfangen.“ Und Jakobus schreibt: „Er bitte aber im Glauben und zweifle nicht; denn wer da zweifelt, der ist gleich wie die Meereswoge, die vom Winde getrieben und gewebet wird. Ein solcher Mensch denke nicht, daß er etwas von dem Herrn empfangen.“

Will ein Mensch ein Kind Gottes werden, so kann das nur geschehen durch den Glauben an Jesum Christum. Denn Paulus sagt: „Ihr seid alle Gottes Kinder durch den Glauben an Christum Jesum.“

Will ein Mensch Vergebung seiner Sünden erlangen, so muß er ja freilich „erkennen seine Missetat, daß er wider den Herrn, seinen Gott, gesündigt hat“, und Reue und Leid über seine Sünden empfinden; aber allein durch den Glauben erlangt er die durch Christum erworbene Vergebung. Denn Petrus sagt: „Von diesem [Jesus] zeugen alle Propheten, daß durch seinen Namen alle, die an ihn glauben, Vergebung der Sünden empfangen sollen.“

Will ein Mensch gute Werke tun, so muß er sie im Glauben tun; denn es steht geschrieben: „Ohne Glauben ist's unmöglich, Gott gefallen.“

Will ein Mensch vor Gott gerecht und selig werden, so kann das nimmermehr geschehen durch eigene Werke und Verdienst, sondern nur durch den Glauben an den, der die Gottlosen gerecht macht. Denn also schreibt Paulus: „So halten wir es nun, daß der Mensch gerecht werde ohne des Gesetzes Werke, allein durch den Glauben.“ „Aus Gnaden seid ihr selig geworden durch den Glauben.“

Kurz, ohne Glauben gibt es keine Erhörung des Gebets, keine Kindschaft Gottes, keine Vergebung, keine guten Werke, keine Gerechtigkeit, keine Seligkeit. „Wer nicht glaubet, der wird verdammt werden.“

Wie not tut es darum, daß wir alle der Ermahnung des Apostels nachkommen: „Versuchet euch selbst, ob ihr im Glauben seid; prüfet euch selbst!“ Wie kann man aber sich darüber prüfen, wenn man gar nicht weiß, was der Glaube ist? Eine gar wichtige Frage muß daher die Frage sein:

Was ist der Glaube?

Eine kurze und deutliche Antwort auf diese Frage haben wir in unserm Texte. Da schreibt der Apostel: „Es ist aber der Glaube eine gewisse Zuvorsicht.“

Eine „Zuvorsicht“ ist also der Glaube, „eine gewisse Zuvorsicht“. Der Glaube ist demnach nicht ein bloßes Wissen. Freilich darf das Wissen nicht fehlen. Das ist durchaus nötig. Sagt doch Paulus: „Wie sollen sie glauben, von dem sie nichts gehört haben?“ Wie kann ein Mensch glauben, daß Gott in sechs Tagen Himmel und Erde und alle Kreaturen erschaffen hat, wenn er von der Schöpfungsgeschichte noch nie etwas gehört hat, davon nichts weiß? Wie kann ein Mensch glauben, daß Jesus Christus von der Jungfrau Maria geboren worden ist, unter Pontius Pilatus gelitten hat, daß er gekreuzigt wor-

den ist, gestorben und begraben, daß er auferstanden und gen Himmel gefahren ist, daß er sich zur Rechten Gottes gesetzt hat und von dannen wiederkommen wird, zu richten die Lebendigen und die Toten, wenn er von dem allem noch nichts gehört hat, davon noch gar nichts weiß? Als Christus den Blindgebornen, den er sehend gemacht hatte, hernach fragte: „Glaubest du an den Sohn Gottes?“ da antwortete er: „Herr, welcher ist's, auf daß ich an ihn glaube?“ Dieser Mensch wußte also nicht, wer der Sohn Gottes sei, geschweige denn, daß Jesus der Sohn Gottes sei. Als aber Christus sich ihm zu erkennen gab und zu ihm sprach: „Du hast ihn gesehen, und der mit dir redet, der ist's“, da rief dieser Mensch alsbald aus: „Herr, ich glaube“, und betete Jesum an.

Also das Wissen tut not. „Wie sollen sie glauben, von dem sie nichts gehöret haben?“ Soll ein Mensch zum Glauben kommen, so ist das Erste und Nottwendigste, daß er Gottes Wort höre und lese, daß er die biblischen Geschichten, ganz besonders die Erlösungsgeschichte, lese oder höre.

Aber das bloße Wissen ist noch nicht der Glaube. Es kann ein Mensch die ganze Heilige Schrift wissen, alle göttlichen Lehren wohl kennen, ein Schriftgelehrter und dabei doch ohne Glauben sein.

Der Glaube ist nach unserm Texte auch nicht ein bloßes Fürwahrhalten. Zwar ist auch das nötig. Wer das, was er aus Gottes Wort weiß, nicht für wahr, sondern für Lüge und Irrtum hält; wer etwa sagt: Das, was die Bibel von der Schöpfung der Welt, von Jesu und seinen Wundern, von seiner Auferstehung und Himmelfahrt erzählt, sind Fabeln und Märlein; das Papier ist geduldig, da läßt sich viel drauf schreiben und drucken: ein solcher ist ein ungläubiger Mensch. Christus sagt: „Wer dem Sohne nicht glaubet“, das heißt, wer das nicht für wahr hält, was der Sohn gesagt hat, „der wird das Leben nicht sehen, sondern der Zorn Gottes bleibt über ihm.“

Nein, nein; der Glaube ist mehr als ein bloßes Wissen, auch mehr als ein bloßes Fürwahrhalten. „Der Glaube ist eine Zuerpflicht, eine gewisse Zuerpflicht.“ Der Glaube ist nicht Sache des Verstandes, sondern Sache des Herzens. Kommt durch Gottes Gnadenwirkung zum Wissen und zum Fürwahrhalten die Zuerpflicht des Herzens hinzu, dann ist das große Werk geschehen, dann ist der Glaube im Herzen eines Menschen geboren.

„Zuerpflicht“, „gewisse Zuerpflicht“, ist nämlich ein Vertrauen, ein herzliches, kindliches Vertrauen auf Gott, auf Gottes Wort und Zusage, auf Gottes Güte, Wahrhaftigkeit und Allmacht, auf Gottes Gnade in Christo Jesu. Da läßt der Mensch alles Vertrauen auf sich, auf Menschen und Fürsten und alle andern Dinge fahren und spricht mit dem Psalmisten: „Nach dir, Herr, verlange ich. Mein Gott, ich hoffe auf dich.“ „Deine Gnade müsse mein Trost sein, wie du deinem Knechte zugesagt hast.“ Ein solcher spricht zu dem Herrn: „Meine Zuerpflicht und meine Burg, mein Gott, auf den ich hoffe.“

Diese gewisse Zuversicht kann sich kein Mensch selber geben. Sie ist eine Gnadengabe des Heiligen Geistes. Sie wird erzeugt im Herzen eines Menschen, wenn er in seiner Not hört, daß Gott so gnädig ist und so gerne hilft; wenn er hört von Gottes Liebe, Gnade, Güte, Freundlichkeit und Allmacht; wenn Gott sich freundlich zu ihm tut und zu ihm spricht: „Rufe mich an in der Not, so will ich dich erretten.“ „Fürchte dich nicht, glaube nur!“ „Fürchte dich nicht, ich bin mit dir; weiche nicht, denn ich bin dein Gott! Ich stärke dich, ich helfe dir auch, ich halte dich durch die rechte Hand meiner Gerechtigkeit.“ Ja, dann kommt es bei einem Menschen dahin, daß er seine Augen zuversichtlich aufhebt zu den Bergen, von welchen ihm Hilfe kommt, daß er spricht: „Das ist meine Freude, daß ich mich zu Gott halte und meine Zuversicht setze auf den Herrn Herrn.“

Diese gewisse Zuversicht wird erzeugt, wenn ein Mensch in seiner Sündenangst und -not hört, daß Jesus die Sünder annimmt; daß Jesus die Versöhnung geworden ist auch für seine Sünden, auch ihm Vergebung erworben hat, und daß Gott so gnädig und barmherzig ist, daß er um Christi willen vergibt Missetat, Übertretung und Sünde. Ja, da ruft er dann in heiliger Verwunderung aus: „Wo ist solch ein Gott, wie du bist, der die Sünde vergibt und erläßt die Missetat den übrigen seines Erbteils? Denn er ist barmherzig.“ Und muß er auch aufs neue Gott um Vergebung anflehen, so ist er doch der gewissen Zuversicht: „Er wird sich meiner wieder erbarmen, meine Missetat dämpfen und alle meine Sünde in die Tiefe des Meeres werfen.“

Ja, das ist Glaube. Das ist Zuversicht, gewisse Zuversicht, wenn es heißt:

Auf meinen lieben Gott	Ob mich mein' Sünd' anfißt,
Trau' ich in Angst und Not;	Will ich verzagen nicht;
Der kann mich allzeit retten	Auf Christum will ich bauen
Aus Trübsal, Angst und Nöten;	Und ihm allein vertrauen;
Mein Unglück kann er wenden,	Ihm tu' ich mich ergeben
Steht all's in seinen Händen.	Im Tod und auch im Leben.

Das ist Zuversicht, gewisse Zuversicht, wenn es auch bei der Wanderung im finstern Tal des Todes noch heißt:

Ob mich der Tod nimmt hin,	Dem tu' ich mich ergeben;
Ist Sterben mein Gewinn	Ich sterb' heut' oder morgen,
Und Christus ist mein Leben,	Mein' Seel' wird er versorgen.

O freue dich, mein lieber Mitchrist, wenn du ein solches Vertrauen, eine solche Zuversicht, zu Gott hast! Dann hast du den wahren, seligmachenden Glauben. Denn „der Glaube ist eine gewisse Zuversicht“.

Aber auch das ist wichtig, was der Apostel diesen Worten noch hinzufügt. Er sagt: „Es ist aber der Glaube eine gewisse Zuversicht des, das man hoffet, und nicht zweifeln an dem, das man nicht siehet.“ Es ist hiernach ein ganz merkwürdig und seltsam Ding um den Glauben. Er hat es nicht zu tun mit dem, was man sieht, sondern mit dem, was

man nicht sieht. Gegenstand des Glaubens sind nicht sichtbare, sondern unserm natürlichen Auge verborgene Dinge. Der Apostel sagt an einer andern Stelle: „Wir wandeln im Glauben und nicht im Schauen.“ Und zu seinem Jünger Thomas, der nicht glauben wollte, daß er auferstanden sei, er habe ihn denn gesehen, sprach der Herr: „Dieweil du mich gesehen hast, Thoma, so glaubest du. Selig sind, die nicht sehen und doch glauben.“ Daher lobt es Petrus an den Christen zu Pontus und an andern Orten, daß sie, obwohl sie Jesum nicht gesehen hätten, ihn doch liebten und nun an ihn glaubten, wiewohl sie ihn nicht sahen.

Alle Christen müssen glauben, was sie noch nie gesehen haben. Der Apostel redet gleich nach unserm Text von der Schöpfung der Welt und sagt: „Durch den Glauben merken wir, daß die Welt durch Gottes Wort fertig ist, daß alles, was man sieht, aus nichts worden ist.“ „Alles, was man sieht“, sagt der Apostel. Ja freilich: Die Welt, Himmel und Erde, Sonne, Mond und Sterne, die Berge, die Gott fest gesetzt hat in seiner Kraft, die Meere, die er gegründet, denen er ein Ziel gesetzt und die er mit seinen Thüren verschlossen hat, die Kreaturen unter dem Himmel und auf der Erde: das alles kann man wohl sehen; aber daß alles, was man sieht, aus nichts, durch Gottes Wort, fertig geworden ist, das kann man nicht sehen, das muß man glauben, glauben, weil es uns Gott gesagt hat.

Wir freuen uns auf die Zeit, da wir Gott sehen werden, wie er ist; aber bis jetzt hat noch niemand Gott gesehen, weder den Vater noch den Sohn noch den Heiligen Geist; und doch, sind wir Gläubige, so zweifeln wir nicht an dem, was wir nicht sehen, sondern loben Gott den Vater, Sohn und Heiligen Geist, beten ihn an und sondern uns ab nicht nur von jenen Toren, die da sprechen: „Es ist kein Gott“, sondern auch von all denen, die zwar den Vater noch ehren wollen, nicht aber den Sohn. Wir waren nicht dabei, als Jesus seine Zeichen und Wunder getan hat, nicht ein einziges derselben haben wir gesehen; und doch zweifeln wir nicht an dem, was wir nicht gesehen haben, sondern glauben, daß er war „ein Prophet mächtig von Thaten und Worten vor Gott und allem Volk“. Wir haben nicht gesehen, daß Christus für uns gelitten hat, für uns gestorben, auferstanden und gen Himmel gefahren ist; und doch zweifeln wir nicht an dem, was wir nicht gesehen haben, sondern sprechen: „Das ist gewißlich wahr.“ Ja, wir freuen und trösten uns seines Leidens und Sterbens, schwingen unsere Glaubensfahne und singen:

Denn in meines Jesu Wunden
Hab' ich schon Erlösung funden,
Und mein Trost in Todesnot
Ist des Herren Jesu Tod.

Wir sehen zwar täglich, daß der Tod in der Welt herrscht und einen Triumph nach dem andern feiert, aber von einer Auferstehung der Toten haben wir noch nichts gesehen; sie liegen noch immer unter der Erde. Und doch zweifeln wir nicht an dem, wovon wir noch nichts

sehen, sondern sprechen an den Gräbern unserer Lieben mit Martha: „Ich weiß wohl, daß er auferstehen wird in der Auferstehung am jüngsten Tage“, und mit Hiob: „Ich weiß, daß mein Erlöser lebet, und er wird mich hernach aus der Erde auferwecken.“

Jesus, der Anfänger und Vollender des Glaubens, schenke uns allen eine solche auf sein Wort gegründete, gewisse Zubericht und mehre, stärke und erhalte uns den Glauben; und wenn wir unsern Lauf vollendet und Glauben gehalten haben, dann lasse er uns um seines Verdienstes willen in alle Ewigkeit schauen, was wir geglaubt und gehofft haben! Hier leben wir „im Hoffen und im Glauben“, dort — das gebe Gott — „im Haben und im Schauen“. Amen. G. G. A. Löber.

Sermon Study for the Third Sunday after Easter (Jubilate).

(Synodical Conference Series.)

MARK 2, 18—22.

In the beginning of His Galilean ministry Jesus availed Himself of the synagogs as the best approach to the respectable element of the people. He came, preaching in their synagogs in all Galilee. Mark 1, 39. The synagog ministry may have come to a halt because of His having ceased to be *persona grata*, there being between the rulers and Him a wide cleavage in point of doctrine. So Jesus next began to minister to the unsynagogued, the excommunicated and outcast, among whom His mission was very successful. Adherents from among them followed Him in large numbers. But He was not let alone in this field either. The Pharisees intruded on a banquet given in His honor and attended by a large concourse of publicans and sinners, and assailed Him and His disciples for eating with publicans and sinners. Jesus so convincingly justified His actions that they had nothing more to say on this score. But they immediately brought up another issue, of which our text speaks. The question concerning fasting is very closely connected with the foregoing incident. From Luke's account it is apparent that the new question is merely the continuation of the dispute started at Levi's banquet. Now, however, the Pharisees were not alone, but had John's disciples as allies.

V. 18. "And the disciples of John and the Pharisees were wont to fast." "Were fasting," ἦσαν . . . νηστεύοντες, may be either imperfect or aorist. But inasmuch as a custom is in question, namely, the practise of fasting, it is best to regard it as the "customary" imperfect. It may be that the questioners were fasting at that very time. To fast is not to eat and drink; not to fast, to eat and drink. Luke 5, 33; Matt. 11, 19. When the fast extended over several days,

fasting consisted in abstaining from customary or choice nourishment. Fasting is here predicated of the disciples of John and the Pharisees. The reading "and of the Pharisees" is to be rejected. The article marks the two classes as distinct, and they were, in name. There was, however, no essential difference between them. They were both self-righteous enemies of Christ. The great name of John, with which the first-named adorned themselves, need not blind us to their real character. Claiming to be disciples of John, they should have followed his teaching. But they were the very opposite of everything the Baptist stood for. John stood for repentance, but they were impenitent. John stood for faith in Christ as the divine Savior, but they were offended in Christ. Contrary to John's ardent wish and pleading they stubbornly refused to align themselves with Christ. Later John, while he lay in prison, sent two of them to Jesus with the well-known question: Matt. 11, 3, no doubt, in a final effort to bring them to a point of conviction where they would embrace Jesus as the Messiah. There was no rivalry between John and Jesus. John did not care to retain any disciples of his own over against the Master. He was not jealous of the rising influence and popularity of Jesus. On the contrary, he regarded that as great cause for rejoicing. John 3, 26—30. If, therefore, some of his disciples persisted in parading as partisans of his, it was not his fault. The true disciples of John accepted his testimony and betook themselves to Christ. In line with the pharisaic self-righteousness of the false disciples of John is their fasting. Of course, they may have actually learned fasting from John, so far as he himself fasted. We know he did fast. Matt. 11, 18. In this chapter we also learn out of the mouth of Jesus why John fasted. It was to dispose the people favorably to his message of repentance and faith. He knew the Pharisees especially would expect ascetic ways and practises of him. And he willingly accommodated himself to their likes and dislikes as far as he lawfully could. Like Paul later, he was willing to be made everything to everybody that he might save some. 1 Cor. 9, 22. But John did not lay fasting on his disciples as a yoke of bondage. Jesus gave John and his ministry His unqualified endorsement, which He could not have done if John had become guilty of such an unwarranted curtailment of Christian liberty. Jesus would have opposed that as vigorously as He later, through His Apostle Paul, resisted every attempt to deprive Christians of any of their liberties. Cf. Col. 2, 16: "Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat or in drink" (*ἐν βρώσει καὶ ἐν πόσει*, in eating and drinking).

The others who are mentioned as wont to fast are the Pharisees. This is not surprising. We know them as work-salvationists, who, in their urge to save themselves by the works of the Law, added ever more man-made rules and regulations to the mass that was already

heavily weighing down on their backs. They were not content with keeping the one fast commanded by God, that on the Day of Atonement, but had undertaken to observe four additional fasts, commemorating national calamities. Nor was this all. They actually fasted twice a week, on Thursday and Monday (the ascent and descent of Moses at Sinai). Luke 5, 33; 18, 12.

"And they come and say to Him, Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast; Thy disciples, however, do not fast?" The subject is indefinite. Mark merely says: *ἔρχονται καὶ λέγουσιν*, and thus suggests that others besides the above-named took a hand in the question. According to Matthew the disciples of John were the inquirers; according to Luke, the Pharisees. "They come and ask" are instances of the historical present, which occurs more than a hundred times in Mark's gospel and lends vividness to the narrative. "They" want to know why it is that the disciples of John and of the Pharisees practise fasting, while the disciples whom He has, in whom He is personally interested, and for whom He is personally responsible, disregard this custom. There is a menacing undertone in the question, to wit: How dare you fly in the face of such authorities as John and the Pharisees and set aside such a time-honored, sacred custom? The question was asked in a hostile spirit by opponents of Jesus.

V. 19. "*And Jesus said to them: Can the sons of the bridechamber, while the bridegroom is with them, fast?*" The interrogatory particle *μή* demands the answer "no." Surely, they can't fast, can they? The sons of the bridechamber are the companions of the bridegroom, "whose duty it was to provide and care for whatever pertained to the bridal chamber, *i. e.*, whatever was needed for the due celebration of the nuptials." (*Thayer.*) It is well at this point to recall the procedure at a wedding of that time in order to appreciate all the better the force of the metaphor Christ uses to depict the joy of the Church. "The elaborately clothed bridegroom (Is. 61, 10), surrounded by his friends, *οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος*, betook himself toward evening to the house of the bride. She was then led thence, and decked with rich ornaments (Is. 49, 18), surrounded by her friends (Ps. 45, 14), accompanied by music and song, with lights, to the house of the parents of the bridegroom into the bridechamber. Now began the wedding 'week,' participated in by those who were bid, which was filled with eating and drinking, joking, singing, and dancing, the guests being clothed in wedding-garments." (*Standard Bible Dictionary.*) Christ is not infrequently referred to as the Bridegroom, the Church as His bride or bridal party, the Gospel as a wedding-feast. Matt. 22, 2; 25, 1—13; Luke 12, 36; 2 Cor. 11, 2; Eph. 5, 25. 26. 32; Rev. 21, 2, etc. What an honor and blessed privilege to be a companion of such a Bridegroom, a guest at such a feast, a partici-

pant in such enjoyable festivities! By the very nature of things fasting is precluded for the friends of the Bridegroom.

As long as they have the Bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. This assertion is already contained in the previous question. Yet it constitutes not a mere superfluous and self-evident answer to a rhetorical question. The explicit reassertion of the statement, already implied, lays stress on it and drives it home all the more effectively. Then, too, the evangelist adds a feature. It is the idea of extension conveyed by the accusative case. The entire length of time the Bridegroom is with them fasting is out of the question. The impression created is that the Bridegroom will prolong His stay with them. And, indeed, it was a matter of only a few days when He was taken away from them.

This applies to-day. Christ continues with His Christians every day, until the end of the world. Matt. 28, 20. He is present with them by virtue of His omnipresence as well as in the means of grace. Nobody, therefore, need expect Christians to fast at any time. Let us note the force of *οὐ δύναται*. It is downright impossible (*οὐ*). Christians cannot fast, because they are in no frame of mind to fast. And they cannot fast, because it would be highly improper for them to do so. A wedding-party is, and of right should be, in a gay, joyful mood. Maimonides, a renowned Jewish teacher of the Middle Ages, says: "In the time of the Messiah there will be no fasting; all days shall be good days and days of joy, as is said Zech. 8, 19." This remark is in perfect accord with what Jesus says on the subject. This time of grace calls for joy and praise and feasting, and depression with its manifestation fasting is thoroughly tabu. The word evangel strikes the key that is to dominate. Gloominess is positively sinful in this cheerful Gospel age. Nothing could be more out of place than to hug it as if it were a virtue. Imagine guests at a wedding refusing to feast with the rest and, instead, observing a fast. Would not that be an insult to the bridal pair? It would be tantamount to declaring: This wedding is a tragedy, or even, it is a sin, and it is our duty, by way of protest, to make solemn faces and decline to eat and drink. What a chill such conduct would throw on the festivities! It would be a demonstration of bad manners, the acme of rudeness.

V. 20. "*But days are coming when the Bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.*" The reading "in those days" is insufficiently attested. Christ is here predicting His death. Then the companions of the Bridegroom fasted. They wept and lamented during the little while when they saw Him no more. John 16, 20. They were sad. Luke 24, 17. To the sorrow which the disciples experienced when death deprived them of the Bridegroom we are not exposed. Christ being raised from the dead,

dieth no more. Rom. 6, 9. He lives to be ever with us. At no time, accordingly, have we any ground whatsoever for fasting, unless, indeed, we by our own fault lose Him by falling back from the joy of believing into the dreariness of work-righteousness.

It does not follow from our text that all fasting is wrong. Such a conclusion would be a reflection on John the Baptist, the prophetess Anna, St. Paul, the Christians at Antioch, indeed, on the Lord Jesus Himself. All of them fasted, not to mention countless other children of God who from times immemorial were wont to fast. Our Confessions recommend fasting as an aid to devotion; our Catechism calls fasting, along with bodily preparation, a fine outward training. Fasting belongs to the adiaphora, and it would be going too far to say on the basis of this pericope that Christians must not fast. And if we will but closely look at Christ's words, it becomes apparent that He uses fasting in a restricted sense. He speaks of fasting as a sign of sorrow. The interrogants themselves so regarded it. They were Pharisees. Even John's disciples were essentially Pharisees, notwithstanding the illustrious name they inappropriately bore. Now, from Matt. 6, 16 we see that the Pharisees disfigured their countenances when fasting. They omitted the usual washing of the face and anointing of the head, impelled by a desire to appear sad. Why? Evidently because they felt that fasting ought to be accompanied by genuine grief. The omniscient Jesus knew precisely what was in their minds when they propounded their question. In giving His answer, He spoke to the point, limiting Himself to a discussion of fasting as they understood it. Also in the Old Testament fasting appears as an expression of grief either over the death of friends and benefactors or over sin or over disasters present or impending. In fact, in the Old Testament the technical term for fasting is to humble or afflict one's soul. Accordingly fasting was forbidden on the Sabbath and on joyful occasions, such as the great festivals. We shall make no mistake if in our text we take fasting as practically synonymous with grieving or mourning. *Νηστεύειν* is *πένθειν*; fasting is mourning. Jesus actually uses the words interchangeably in Matthew's account of the incident. Matt. 9, 15. Jesus does not say that it is impossible for Christians to feel grief or sorrow; but what He does say is that sorrow cannot have dominion over them. A Christian cannot go on in a state of depression. The use of the infinitive present, designating linear or durative action, is very significant in this connection. Habitual grief, a state of gloom, a melancholy character, is foreign to, and inconsistent with, faith. Cf. Paul's admonitions to rejoice. Phil. 4, 4; 1 Thess. 5, 16; see also Rom. 5, 3; Jas. 1, 2. We must accordingly not regard the fasting of John the Baptist, of Paul, and of Jesus, as well as of believers, as indicative or expressive of joylessness, but rather as practised for other reasons, though their hearts for very joy did leap. That John

the Baptist's heart was full of joy, though he fasted, we may well believe on the strength of an utterance which he made as the leader (*ὁ φίλος τοῦ νυμφίου*) of the companions of the bridegroom. John 3, 29.

Coming to the second, the parabolic, part of our lesson, it may be well to remark at the outset that it is addressed to the disciples of John and the Pharisees first of all, but also to the self-righteous and the unregenerate in general. Jesus shows in this section why they fast and should fast. He says to them in effect: It is altogether fitting and becoming for you to mourn and lament, to be gloomy and doleful. By taking any other course, you would be both acting foolishly and adding to your plight, as long as you persist in rejecting Me, your Savior, through unbelief.

V. 21. "*Nobody sews a patch torn off unfulled cloth on an old coat. Otherwise that which fills up takes from it, the new from the old, and the rent becomes worse.*" Raw, unmilled, unfulled cloth shrinks on being exposed to moisture. Hence when a piece of it is patched on an old coat, it can only make matters worse. The fresh material (new as opposed to worn-out) contracts and carries with it a part of the old garment. The coat is worn over the tunic. "It is a rectangular, seamless piece of coarse woolen, so folded and sewed together that the front is left open on either side, and large holes are provided for the free movement of the arms." (*Standard Bible Dictionary*.) The old coat is the innate wretchedness people are afflicted with as the result of original sin. It is the coat all the unconverted, all the children of wrath, wear. And it is impossible to improve that coat by sewing on it a patch of joy. Joy is the prerogative of the regenerate, and for the unregenerate to affect joy is both foolish and futile. They may work themselves into a state of fancied or seeming happiness, but soon disillusionment is certain to follow. The joy will shrink under the storm and stress of untoward conditions, leaving the poor dupes in a worse condition than before. Comedians are often tragedians at heart. Professed optimists not rarely commit suicide. If not, they will nevertheless be obliged to admit at least to themselves that their joyfulness is forced and unreal, sickly and doomed, either a hothouse growth or mere make-belief, a hollow mockery. It is either — cast away the filthy rags of your own righteousness, put off the old man, and put on the wedding-garment of Christ's righteousness, the new man, or remain wretched and perish. There is no other alternative.

V. 22. "*And nobody puts new wine into old skins. Else the wine will tear the skins, and the wine goes to waste as well as the skins.*" "New wine ferments; old skins have lost their toughness and stretchableness. They have become hard leather and give no more." (*Expositor's Greek Testament*.) No one does anything so disastrous on the natural plane, but on the spiritual such foolish procedure is very common. The import of this parable is much the same as the pre-

ceding. The disciples of John and the Pharisees were pouring new wine into old bottles. They were unconverted, in their old sinful condition. Yet they felt rather certain that "God is in the heavens, and all's right with the world," that God was well pleased with them, regarded them as righteous above all people, and beamed on them with divine favor. There was little doubt in their minds that heaven belonged to them as a matter of course. Now all this is new wine. Justification, the love and favor of God, the divine Fatherhood, eternal life, are treasures that belong to the Gospel or to faith. God gives them to believers, and to believers only. It is utterly wrong and foolish for unbelievers or unregenerate sinners to appropriate them to themselves on the basis of the Law, of works and merits. Only harm can come from such folly. The new wine bursts the old skins, ruins the unbelievers. Imagining they have of themselves what can only be obtained from Christ through faith in Him, they go on in impenitence, treasuring for themselves wrath till they are engulfed in eternal damnation. And the new wine, too, is spilled. Christ labored and died for them in vain. The Cross of Christ, on account of their smug self-complacency and unbelief, is made of no effect and the grace of God rendered inoperative. Furthermore, they do not do aught in behalf of the Gospel. Their life is wasted in opposition to the Savior.

Putting new wine into old wine-skins is a very common practise. Hordes of outspoken enemies of Christ arrogate to themselves what the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ alone can bestow — righteousness, peace, in a word, salvation. And think of the numerous hypocrites who profess orthodoxy and yet make the Gospel an occasion unto the flesh, convert liberty into license, and abuse the grace of God as an encouragement and stimulus to sin. We have, no doubt, such servants of sin in our congregations. This text offers pastors an opportunity to combat this hypocrisy and wickedness. It needs to be combated. All the apostles in all their epistles polemize against this fatal delusion of the carnal mind.

"But new wine into new skins." The best MSS omit *βλητέον* "must be put." Accept the Gospel in a good and honest heart. Those who are genuinely sorrowful over their sins, seeking grace and trusting with all their hearts in their Savior, are the ones who preserve both the Gospel and themselves. They preserve the Gospel, for their efforts are bent to keep it pure and true for themselves and others; and they preserve themselves. They will go on with the light of true joy in their souls, and in the end enter the eternal joy of their Lord.

Since these sayings of Jesus were called forth by a question addressed to Him, the theme that most naturally suggests itself is: *Jesus Answers a Double Question.* 1) Why His disciples fast not. Vv. 18—20. 2) Why John's disciples and the Pharisees fast. Vv. 21.

22. — The pericope revolves about the idea of fasting. A sermon on the subject is therefore indicated. One might outline as follows: *Whether People Should Fast or Not Depends on Their Religion.* 1) For believers, fasting is impossible. 2) For unbelievers fasting alone is appropriate. (*Note.* — The term fasting is here used in the sense in which Jesus employed it. This ought to be set forth in the introduction.) — *Jesus Speaks of Fasting as a Sign of Sorrow.* For 1) such fasting is impossible for His disciples, while 2) it is the only thing to do for non-disciples. — Many pastors may want to utilize the *motif* of the third Sunday after Easter. The text admirably lends itself to this purpose. The concepts joyfulness and its dismal opposite pervade the entire discourse. The following sketches may serve to indicate the possibilities: *Jubilate, the Summons to Rejoice.* 1) To whom it applies. 2) To whom not. — *Why Should Joy, Not Sorrow, Be the Ruling Principle in the Christians' Life?* 1) The Bridegroom is always with them. 2) They are new creatures. Vv. 21. 22. — *The Church a Wedding Party.* 1) Why? V. 19. 2) What follows from this? The need a) of cheerfulness, b) of a wedding-garment, c) of a new heart to receive the new wine of the Gospel. — *How Should the Companions of the Bridegroom Be?* 1) Joyful; 2) properly clothed; 3) receptive (a new heart, or faith, needed to receive the gifts of the Bridegroom). Bengel: "*Parabolam a veste, a vino; imprimis opportunam convivio.*" — Taking into account the Easter cycle to which *Jubilate* belongs, it will not be amiss to preach on the theme: *The Resurrection of Christ a Source of Joy.* 1) It removed the one possible cause of despondency (the removal of the Bridegroom through death). 2) It made available the new garment of Jesus' blood and righteousness and thus faith, or a new heart. — *The Wretchedness of Work-religionists.* 1) They cannot recognize Christ as the Bridegroom. 2) Their joy is illusory, foolish, destructive. — *The Fundamental Difference Between Believers and Unbelievers.* 1) Believers have cause only for joy; 2) unbelievers, only for grief.

Hufsmith, Tex.

PAUL G. BIRKMANN.

Outlines on Old Testament Texts.

Second Sunday after Easter.

Ps. 23.

a. Our Gospel-lesson is perhaps the sweetest in the whole series set aside for meditation during the church-year. In it Christ assures us that He is our Good Shepherd. Briefly explain the sweet consolation wrapped up in the word *Shepherd*. b. But the Lord says also: "I am *the Good Shepherd*." 1) He is *the Shepherd*; the only

Shepherd we have. 1 Pet. 2, 25; Heb. 13, 20. 2) He is the *Good Shepherd*, from whom we receive nothing but goodness. c. This He proves by offering three conclusive arguments: 1) "giveth His life," v. 11; 2) "know My sheep," v. 14; 3) "them also I must bring," v. 16. d. In view of Christ's painful death on the cross and His glorious resurrection these words have a deep significance. By His death and resurrection He has proved Himself to be our Good Shepherd. e. Should we not meditate upon this wonderful truth? Again and again the Bible comforts us through the blessed assurance that Christ is our Good Shepherd. Ps. 80, 2; Is. 40, 11; Jer. 31, 10; Ezek. 34, 11, 12; Zech. 13, 7; John 10, 11—18, *et al.* Let us, then, consider —

JESUS, THE RISEN SAVIOR, OUR GOOD SHEPHERD.

1. *In life;* 2. *In death;* 3. *In eternity.*

1.

A. *Jesus, the risen Savior, our Good Shepherd in life.* "The Lord is my Shepherd." V. 1a. a. These precious words of David must be the sincere confession of every believer. Every true Christian should call "Jehovah," that is, the God of the covenant, our blessed Redeemer, Jesus Christ, *his* Shepherd. A person who does not confidently confess this is no true Christian. 1) These are words of *faith*. It is *true faith* to say: "The Lord is my Shepherd." 2) These are words of sincere *gratitude*, a Christian's triumphant song over devil, sin, and hell. 3) These are words of personal consecration: Since the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall serve Him all my life. Gal. 2, 19, 20. — b. Do you say, "The Lord is my Shepherd"? Indeed, Christ has died for us and given us His most precious Gospel that we might learn to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd." And He is our Shepherd now, at this very moment, while we are living on earth.

B. This He proves a. by His shepherd's care. V. 1: "I shall not want." 1) That applies to our *earthly* needs. In our earthly life we shall never suffer want. Luk. 22, 35. The First Article. 2) That applies to our spiritual wants. He supplies every want of the soul: He fulfilled the Law for us, Gal. 4, 4, 5; He secured for us righteousness, forgiveness of sins, peace with God, Rom. 3, 21—25; 4, 5; 5, 1—3; 6, 19. — b. This He proves by the comfort and happiness which He abundantly gives us each day. V. 2. 1) He "maketh me to lie down"; He "leadeth me." We do not go to the living fountain of comfort by our own strength; nay, He brings us there, Titus 3, 5; John 6, 44; 12, 32. It is by His grace that we are and remain believers, blessed with all spiritual blessings. Eph. 1, 3—7. 2) "Green pastures"; "still waters." These are the blessed consolations of the Gospel offered to us in the Word and in the Sacraments. John 10, 9; Ezek. 34, 14; Is. 12, 3; 55, 1; Zech. 14, 8; John 4, 14; Rev. 21, 6. Oh, how good a Shepherd we have in this life! — c. This He proves by

keeping us in faith and thus sanctifying us. V.3. 1) "He restoreth my soul." When we fall from grace by sinning wilfully; when we lose our faith, our Good Shepherd restores us. Ps. 119, 176; Ex. 15, 26. Examples: David, Peter, etc. 2) "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness." He keeps us in the straight and good way that leads to eternal life and makes us abound in fruits of righteousness. 1 Cor. 1, 30; John 17, 17; 15, 1—16; 1 Pet. 1, 5; 2 Thess. 3, 3. This He does "for His name's sake," because He is Jesus, our Good Shepherd. Matt. 1, 21.

C. a. Jesus, then, is our Good Shepherd: 1) So He tells us. 2) This He proves to us by caring for us, by leading us to green pastures, by restoring our souls, by leading us in the paths of righteousness. These proofs are incontestable. Jesus would not do this if He were not our Good Shepherd. — b. Is Jesus your good Shepherd in life? Do you confess: "The Lord is my Shepherd"? Do you implicitly trust in Him for all temporal and spiritual blessings? Do you follow Him to the green pastures and the still waters? Do you permit Him to restore your soul? Do you walk in righteous paths? Examine yourselves. 2 Cor. 13, 5. Blessed are we if Christ Jesus, the risen Savior, is our Good Shepherd in life. For then He will also be

2.

A. *Our Good Shepherd in death.* V.4. This sweet passage assures us, a. that Jesus is our Good Shepherd in death. "Thou art with me." 1) Death, as our text tells us, is a *valley*, deep and dark, full of terrors and dangers. Rom. 6, 23. 2) *All men* must pass through this valley. Rom. 5, 12. 3) But Christ is our Good Shepherd also in death; He walks with us through the valley of death. Rom. 5, 21; 1 Cor. 15, 55; Heb. 2, 14; John 11, 25. 4) Therefore we need not fear evil. Rom. 8, 38; John 5, 24; 8, 51, 52; 1 Cor. 15, 56; Heb. 2, 15. 5) Death is only a shadow, "the valley of the shadow of death." There is no substantial evil in it. "The shadow of a serpent will not sting nor the shadow of a sword kill." 1 Cor. 15, 55. 6) We shall only "*walk through*" the valley of the shadow of death, but not remain in it. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, carries us through it without permitting any harm to befall us. Rom. 5, 10; Heb. 11, 5; Ps. 68, 21; 116, 15. Christ thus proves that He is our Good Shepherd; for He remains with us when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. — b. This passage proves that Jesus, our Good Shepherd, comforts us in death with His rod and staff, His precious Gospel. With His Word He comforts His dying saints; underneath them are His everlasting arms. Luke 23, 43.

B. a. Surely, Christ is our Good Shepherd in death; for 1) He is with us; 2) His Word comforts us. — b. Therefore be faithful. Rev. 2, 10. — "Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep," for then Jesus is

3.

A. *Our Good Shepherd in eternity.* V. 5. a. He prepares a table before us. Matt. 25, 10; Rev. 19, 7—10. The table is the heavenly feast of eternal bliss. b. "In the presence of mine enemies." Luke 16, 23—26. In eternal life the saints will triumph over their enemies, Satan, sin, hell, death. Rev. 5, 6—14; 7, 14—17; 14, 1—5, etc. c. He anoints our heads with oil, as Kings and priests in glory. Ps. 126, 5, 6; 35, 10; 16, 11; 1 Pet. 4, 13. d. Our heavenly bliss is perfect, ineffably great. "My cup runneth over." Rom. 8, 18; Matt. 5, 12. e. Our bliss will be eternal. V. 6. As we have received goodness and mercy in this life, so also in the life to come. Christ's goodness shall follow us into the everlasting "house of the Lord." John 14, 1—3. f. Our bliss is sure and certain—"surely." Titus 2, 13; Rom. 8, 34—39; Rev. 14, 13.

B. Jesus, the risen Savior, will be our Good Shepherd in all eternity, as He is in life and death. a. Let us, then, believe in Him. b. Let us love and serve Him. c. Let us confess His name and preach His Word, Matt. 10, 32. d. Let us thank Him in word and deed that He has revealed Himself as our Good Shepherd and taught us to say: "The Lord is my Shepherd." 1 Pet. 2, 25; Heb. 13, 20, 21.

St. Louis, Mo.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER.

Third Sunday after Easter.

Ps. 100.

An essential part of all divine worship, whether private or public, is the giving of thanks. But lest we forget, the God to whom we give our thanks will have *all men* to be saved. 1 Tim. 2, 1—4; 2 Pet. 3, 9. Is this divine will always present in our minds when we worship? Are our thanksgivings always accompanied by the desire that all men might worship the true God?

Our brief, but precious psalm is but one of many exhortations in the Bible instructing us as to the thoughts and desires that should govern our hearts when we give thanks unto God. It is the climax of the singing beginning at Ps. 95. Its inscription reads (lit.): A Psalm for thanksgiving or for a thank-offering. (For the ritual of the peace-offering for a thanksgiving cf. Lev. 7, 11—15.) Like the clarion call of a trumpet the appeal sounds forth (lit.): "Shout unto the Lord, all the earth." Cf. Ps. 66, 1; 98, 4 a. (In ever-varying language the same summons is found in the Psalter, esp. Pss. 96—98. But our psalm is addressed to the earth, while Ps. 95, 1—7 is an invitation exclusively to the children of Israel.) Repeat text, at least in part. These rousing, ringing strains prompt us to ponder—

*THE CHURCH'S STANDING INVITATION TO ALL MEN
TO JOIN HER IN WORSHIPING THE ONLY TRUE GOD.*

1. *Behold the glorious worship of her God!*

2. *Behold the glorious God of her worship.*

1.

The Church has at all times invited all those who are without to join her in her worship, the only true worship. However, this invitation is not a blank and bleak order, but a longing, loving call, accompanied with detailed instructions as to how the true God is to be worshipped.

Namely, a. v. 1, not with murmuring and sullen, but with joyful hearts do we worship and praise the Lord. With shouts of homage, in hymns of praise do we appear before Him. V. 2. With willing minds the true worshipers *serve* the Lord, considering it the highest honor to be servants of the Most High, unworthy though they be of the honor. Cf. Ps. 2, 11. With an ever-ready mind they serve the God of the covenant, knowing that this is the one and only pleasure, a pleasure of which the heart never becomes surfeited. Out of the abundance of their heart, as they review their blessings from the Lord, their mouth speaketh. Luke 6, 45; Matt. 12, 34. With singing of psalms, spiritual songs, they come before the Lord's presence in the congregation. Eph. 5, 19, 20; Col. 3, 16. Why, the very spiritual joy of such worshipers is an invitation to join them.

b. V. 3. And why do the true worshipers thus rejoice in the Lord? Because they know that only the God of revelation is the true God. All other gods are mere fiction and fancy. The Lord whom we gratefully adore is the living God. "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves." Ps. 119, 73 a. His sovereign power made us of clay. (Hymn 78, 2.) Not by our wish or will were we made. Melancthon, sorely saddened by the death of his two-year-old son George, who died 1527, comforted his soul with this statement. (For the opposite sentiment cf. the proud boasts of the prince of Tyre and Pharaoh of Egypt. Ezek. 28, 2; 29, 3.) We are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Ps. 95, 7. How did we come to be His people? Answer: The Lord made us His people. (Reading the K'thibh and taking "people" as predicate object of "made." So Luther *et al.* Cf. for this Hebrew usage 1 Sam. 12, 6; for the thought as applied to Israel see Deut. 32, 6, 15; Ps. 149, 2; Is. 29, 23; 60, 21. Beginning with the call of Abraham, "Israel" is God's "work.") This is the confession also of the New Testament. Israel: Eph. 2, 10. Hence there is never any boasting in the true Church, except "in the Lord," to whom all owe, not only their existence and their preservation, but, above all, their salvation. But that very Lord wants to save *all men*. His worshipers present the very best proof; for God's present worshipers are "sinners," made righteous by God. Hence all men should acknowledge that the Lord is God; for "with Him is *forgiveness*, that He might be feared," revered, praised. Ps. 130, 4.

c. V. 4. With thanksgiving we enter the gates of God's house, etc., as Israel of old entered the Temple, which was to be called a house of

prayer for all people. Is. 56, 7. With thankful hearts we magnify His name; for there is none beside Him. — With these sentiments the true worshipers adore God wherever they worship the one true God in the assembly.

To this glorious worship all men are ever invited by the Church, and the invitation itself instructs those invited how they should praise and worship the Lord. Surely a worship of which we need never be ashamed. By such service alone is all glory ascribed to God in keeping with His own command: Matt. 4, 10; Deut. 6, 13; 10, 20. Every word in the invitation reveals it to be a worship in spirit and in truth, John 4, 24, a worship of "spiritual sacrifices," 1 Pet. 2, 5; and such worship of the heart, the body being a living sacrifice unto God, is the only reasonable service (*λογικὴ λατρεία*): Rom. 12, 1.*

When did you last invite any one to join you in the only true and glorious worship of the Lord, *your* God?

However, this invitation does not merely ask men to join the Church in her praises and blessings of the Lord, it also reminds them of the nature of the God we worship. If we are to have the true worship, we must self-evidently also worship the true God. And, oh, what a glorious God is our God, to whose worship we invite all the earth!

2.

a. V. 5. The Lord — Jehovah, four times in this short song — is *good*. Ps. 107, 1; 118, 1, 29; Jer. 33, 11, etc. The only true God, whose name, nature, character, and heart are revealed in His Word, and whose people we are, is good, benign. Ps. 25, 8; 34, 8. There is absolutely no evil, no guile, in Him. We know, acknowledge, and have experienced His goodness in our own lives, upon our immortal souls; yea, His very goodness has led men, and still leads them, and ought to lead all men, to repentance. Rom. 2, 4. But more, He is good to all, Ps. 145, 9, and therefore all the earth's inhabitants are invited in our psalm to praise the Lord. In spite of all appearances to the contrary, our God is good to all. Not only is He holy, righteous, and good Himself, but He reveals, displays, manifests, His goodness and benignity in His dealings with men, Matt. 5, 44; Acts 14, 17; Ps. 65, 9—13. Accordingly, we "utter the fames [A. V., memory] of His great goodness," Ps. 145, 7, in all our worship. — The appearances to the contrary are explained in Ps. 95, 7—11; Heb. 3,

* Note the New Testament spirituality and universality of appeal in this psalm. It is not Jew calling upon Gentile or Gentile calling upon Jew to praise God; it is the heart of love, hoping all things, embracing *all the world*, v. 1, in its appeal. True religion narrow-minded, narrow-hearted? Whence these words? Some evidently do not know the 100th Psalm is in the Bible. "Ye would not," in Matt. 23, 37, is the tragic testimony of Him who knows all men and all things.

7—4, 13; Rom. 11, 22. Continuing in His goodness, though men mock and sneer at our faith in *a good God*, let us ever invite all to taste and see that the Lord is good. Ps. 34, 8; 1 Pet. 2, 3.

b. His mercy, His loving-kindness, endureth forever (*A. V.*, is everlasting). How often we are assured of this in His Word! Ex. 34, 6, 7; Num. 14, 18; Ps. 86, 5, 15; 103, 8; 107, 1; 118, 1, 29; 145, 8; Jer. 33, 11. No wonder that even the New Testament Church has taken this and the preceding statement into its liturgy. No one can read the history of God's ways with men, especially the sacred history of His people in the Old Testament, or review his own life's journey without exclaiming: Ps. 145, 8, 9. Above all do we see His loving-kindness in the gift of His only-begotten Son. So deeply, so greatly did He love—whom? *The world*. But alas! how has the world responded?—After centuries of human ingratitude and apostasy the mercy of God in Christ Jesus is still held out to all men. For the invitation: "Him that cometh," etc., John 6, 37, is still valid. Let us apply the severe test of experience: Is there any one here who can claim and prove that the Lord has not been good, forgiving, and long-suffering over against him?—But why, then, are we so slow and sluggish in telling those who do not know the Lord: Behold our glorious God! Great is His loving-kindness toward us! Ps. 117, 2; 2 Pet. 3, 9.

c. His truth, *i. e.*, faithfulness, endureth to all generations. Ps. 117, 2 b. Our God is faithful, absolutely dependable, steady, in all that He has spoken, in all His pledges and promises, faithful in His marvelous love. This assurance, too, is given us again and again in His eternal Word. Deut. 7, 9; Is. 49, 7; 1 Cor. 1, 9; 10, 13; 1 Thess. 5, 24; 2 Thess. 3, 3; Heb. 10, 23; 1 Pet. 4, 19; 1 John 1, 9. Do you believe this? If you do, you will feel sorry for those who do not believe it, who are trusting in unstable and fickle statements of fiction and fancy, which change according to expediency and policy and do not even stand the test of one generation of time. Friend, here is a God whose faithfulness endures to all generations, whose Word is settled forever in heaven. Ps. 119, 89.—And what of those who do not believe that God is always faithful? Shall their unbelief make the faith, faithfulness, of God without effect? Rom. 3, 3, 4. God forbid! In spite of man's faithlessness throughout the centuries the faithfulness of God continues.

Truly, a wonderful, a glorious God is our God. So good, so merciful, so faithful! There is none other God; for there is none like unto Him. And whenever we bring our thanks and our thank-offerings in divine worship, let us remember that we are to declare His goodness, His mercy, and His faithfulness to all men.

Conclusion. A wonderful song indeed is this little psalm, standing in the very center of the songs of God's people, embracing the world in its appeal. Let us take this invitation and carry it about

with us: the living Church's standing invitation to all the earth to join her in sincerely and gratefully worshiping, praising, and serving her God, the only true God, who wills that all, all of earth's millions should be saved, etc. 1 Tim. 2, 4. (Close with doxology in Eph. 3, 21.)

Los Angeles, Cal.

O. W. WISMAR.

Fourth Sunday after Easter.

JER. 15, 15—21.

Jeremiah lived at a dreadful time. It was the generation that followed the jazz age to which Isaiah had ministered (cf. Is. 1 and 3), some seventy years before. The indifferent, materialistic, adulterous nation was now hastening to its doom. 15, 1—4. God's long-suffering was exhausted. He was "weary with repenting." V. 16. It was Jeremiah's thankless task to call defiant and blasphemous Jerusalem to repentance and to administer comfort to "the remnant." V. 11. At the brink of despair Jeremiah flees to the bosom of His God.

A WORRIED PROPHET AND HIS LORD.

1. *What the worried prophet discloses to his Lord;*
2. *What the Lord assures His prophet.*

1.

a. What the prophet pleads for.

Jeremiah asks God for merciful consideration. V. 15 a. "*Thou knowest.*" Thou art aware of the taunts and blasphemies of the enemies, of the apostasy of the Church. Thou knowest my agony, anxiety, and heartache, as well as the means to refresh and comfort me. "*Remember me.*" Do not forget, neglect, forsake me. If God will keep him in mind as He did Noah, Gen. 8, 1, or Abraham, Gen. 9, 29, he will be at ease. "*Visit me*" with Thy grace, mercy, love. Ps. 106, 4; Job 10, 12; Luke 1, 68. 78.

Jeremiah pleads to be avenged of his adversaries and persecutors. V. 15 b. Children of God are bound to suffer persecution. 2 Tim. 3, 12; Matt. 5, 10—12; John 15, 20. Church History. Acts 7, 52. Jeremiah was broken-hearted because his own kindred, the city of his birth, Anathoth, cruelly repudiated him, Cp. 11, 20 ff.; 12, 6. Persecutions at Jerusalem; cp. 18, 5. 6. 18; 19, 14. 15; 20, 1. 2; 26, 2—6. 7 ff.; 36, 1 ff. 26; 37, 11—15; 38, 3. 5 ff. — Jeremiah prays to be vindicated. Cf. John 16, 7—11; Ps. 7, 1; 31, 15—18; 119, 84—87.

God in His mercy is to spare His prophet. V. 15 c. His life was threatened. Jeremiah felt that if God in His long-suffering would let the ungodly persecutors have their way, his life would be forfeited. The despairing servant of Jehovah placed himself under the shadow of the Almighty. Ps. 91; John 17, 15.

b. On what does Jeremiah base his plea?

It was for the sake of the Lord and His Word that he suffered rebuke. Vv. 15 d. 16. It was not his own message that he had delivered, as were the preachments of the reputed and favored prophets of Jerusalem, chap. 14, 13 ff.; on the contrary, he searched and found, not only tasted, but ate and digested and rejoiced in, the Word of God. Chap. 1, 9; Ezek. 2, 8; Rev. 10, 9. God's honor was at stake.

Jeremiah furthermore pleads his integrity as a prophet. His conduct was blameless. Neither had he with flattering falsehoods prostituted his high office to gratify covetousness. He had not joined himself to the hail-fellows that reviled God. He did not even take time for joyful relaxation and recreation, but rather, as a lonely voice in the wilderness, applied himself most assiduously to the exacting duties of his office. V. 17; 1 Tim. 3, 2, 7; Ps. 7, 8—10; 26, 1—6; Should his career be a failure? Should the enemies of God and of His Word gain the day?

He bases his plea also on God's faithfulness. V. 18. God had given him glorious promises. Chap. 1. 8. 10. 18 f. Now he seemed to be forsaken of God like Joseph when in Pharaoh's prison, like Elijah when the brook failed. 1 Kings 17, 7; 19, 4; Ps. 73. He was not insensible to insult and persecution. Chap. 15, 10; 20, 14—18. His Lord, however, was a faithful God. Deut. 7, 9; Is. 49, 7; 1 Cor. 1, 9; 10, 23. Should the Lord's own prophet despair of that faithfulness? Ps. 25, 20; 36, 5.

2.

a. God directs His worried servant courageously and conscientiously to perform the duties of his office if he would be the true prophet of Jehovah. V. 19.

V. 19 a. "Return," *i. e.*, dispel every doubt, fear, anxiety, as though the Lord on the throne were making mistakes. Elijah, 1 Kings 19, 9 ff.; Jonah 4, 4. Proclaim My Word without fear or doubt, and I will take care of the issue.

V. 19 b. Jeremiah was to bear in mind that there were souls that were precious in the sight of God among the vile. The "remnant." V. 11; 1 Kings 19, 18; Rev. 3, 8—10. He would be the spokesman of God (1 Pet. 4, 11) and His faithful steward, if he divided the Law and Gospel properly. 2 Tim. 2, 15; 1 Cor. 4, 1.

V. 19 c. Nothing should tempt him to deviate from the message he was to proclaim. There was to be no compromising with, or condescending to, the standards of falsehood. 2 Tim. 4, 1—5; Titus 2, 7.

b. If Jeremiah would comply with these directions, success would be assured. Vv. 20. 21; Josh. 1, 5—9; Is. 44, 24 ff.; 55, 11; 1 Sam. 3, 19; 2 Tim. 4, 8.

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

GEN. 18, 16—33.

1 Tim. 2, 1. Intercession is to be made for all men. In bringing his personal needs before God, in praying for his own soul's welfare, the Christian does not fail to remember others in his prayers. He excludes nobody, but prays even for the wicked.

*ABRAHAM'S INTERCESSION FOR SODOM AND
GOMORRAH.*

Let us note

1. *Its marks,*

2. *Its answer.*

1.

Vv. 17—19. Jehovah cannot hide from Abraham what He intends to do because he is the chosen father of all believers and the leader and teacher of his posterity. From him his descendants are to learn the ways of the Lord unto their salvation and learn how to escape the doom of the wicked. The destruction of the godless cities is to remind him and the generations after him of God's inflexible justice in visiting the sins upon such as have filled the cup of sin to overflowing. — God's children are the teachers of the world and are able to judge world events rightly because God is their Teacher. Ps. 25, 9, 14; Jer. 31, 33; Is. 48, 17; John 14, 26; 6, 45.

V. 20 f. The sins of the cities are crying to high heaven. Cp. Gen. 4, 10; 13, 13; 19, 13; Ex. 2, 23; Jer. 51, 9; Jonah 1, 2; Ex. 22, 22 f. *Asu kalah*, v. 21, indicates the extreme limits of their wickedness. — God's patience and long-suffering over against the sinners who constantly defy His infinite power and justice is beyond comprehension. From time to time He postpones the day of wrathful visitation, but finally He exacts fearful vengeance.

"But Abraham stood yet before the Lord." No doubt, he contemplated the terrible disaster which was to befall the cities. It was a staggering revelation. Besides, he could not have failed to think of Lot and his family. — Christians give very earnest and solemn thought to those frightful catastrophes by which the godless are hurled into eternity. What dire consequences they imply!

Abraham's contemplation moves him to intercession. And how humble he is! V. 27, "dust and ashes"; the former when he was made, the latter in his death. He is aware that he is speaking to the "Judge of all the earth." V. 25. He pleads with God not to take his impertinence amiss. Vv. 30, 32; cp. Judg. 6, 39. — In heartfelt humility Christians should always approach God in prayer. They should open their lips before Him with a prayer for forgiveness of their own sins.

But Abraham's confidence was as great as his humility. He comes before God in childlike trust. Presumptuous though his petitions may seem, yet he confidently utters them. His bargaining

with the Lord seems insulting, but it is that courage which springs from a God-fearing heart. — With all boldness and confidence Christians should utter their petitions before God, knowing that they are acceptable and heard. It is that holy *anaideia* of which the Savior speaks Luke 11, 8. Yes, there is that impertinence of faith which bridges the limitless span between the Maker and the creature and takes God by storm till He yields. Matt. 21, 22; Jas. 1, 6. Jacob. The woman of Canaan.

Abraham's intercession rests upon a firm foundation. He does not base his pleas upon his own righteousness, but he appeals to the righteousness of God. Vv. 23, 25; cp. Deut. 32, 4; Job 8, 3. Again, he is aware of the undeserved promise of the Messiah which he had received and which reminded him of the greatness of God's mercy. If God's love shown to him, a worthless sinner, is so fathomless, can he not hope that God will have mercy upon other great sinners? — Christians should pray as Daniel prayed. Dan. 9, 18; cp. Heb. 7, 19. Aware of the redeeming love of Christ, who has bought the souls of all men, Christians should plead for the wicked that their day of grace may not be cut short. Thus they prove that they are not only concerned about their own soul's salvation, but are also mindful of the spiritual condition of the unconverted. Oh, may we not fail to pray for our own wicked generation and thus stay the storms of God's terrible vengeance! God expects that from you. Cp. Ezek. 22, 30.

Prayers like those of Abraham are blessed with an answer from on high.

2.

God reveals His true nature in His attitude to Abraham's six-fold petition. How kindly and patiently He heeds his words! The bold man of prayer is not reproved because of his troublesome pertinacity. — We should judge that He who hears the song of angels pouring into His ears would consider our prayers mere prattle. But such is not the case. He is our Father through Jesus Christ. He knows how much His frail children need His help. Ps. 103, 13 f. He feels Himself bound by His promises which He has given to those who ask, seek, and knock.

Jehovah assures Abraham of His willingness to act upon His repeated request. Cp. Ezek. 33, 11. He was willing to spare the cities if but ten righteous were to be found in them. But we know that their perversion and depravity had come to such a turn as to make it impossible for God to spare them. Cp. Rom. 2, 4. — God teaches us hereby that our prayers for the iniquitous race of our day are sure to be heard, yes, that God is ready to consent to our request even if but a small number of righteous can yet be found.

Abraham could not save Sodom and Gomorrah, but his pleas for mercy, no doubt, prompted the Lord to lead Lot and his own out before it rained fire and brimstone on the wicked inhabitants. Thus

God answered his prayer in His own manner. — Many of our prayers may seem like wasted breath. But do not let us be deceived by appearances. God jealously keeps His promises, even though at times He answers our pleas in His own way and time. The story of our text fills us with the confidence that some can and will be saved as long as we are serious enough to pray for the rescue of the wayward. Pray, therefore, for your infidel neighbor, your thoughtless relative, your prodigal son or daughter, your unbelieving husband or wife. Weigh the doom that is awaiting them and ponder the importance of your ceaseless prayer for just such persons.

Prayer is a high art. Learn to pray as Abraham prayed and do not forget the promises of your God. God accords your prayers a power by which He permits Himself to be conquered. B.

Ascension Day.

Ps. 47.

Many people, in thinking of the Old Testament Messianic prophecies, have in mind such as are connected with the outstanding events in the early life and ministry of Jesus, especially those which deal with Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and the Lenten season. (A few of these may be enumerated.) — But the prophets of old were also the messengers proclaiming the individual incidents of Christ's exaltation which are not directly connected with any of the great festivals. Thus Christ's descent into hell is indicated in the Old Testament. In celebrating the present day, we think especially of the ascension of Christ and of His sitting at the right hand of God.

THE WONDERFUL PROPHECY OF THE MESSIAH'S EXALTATION.

It contains —

1. An admonition to regard with awe and praise the majesty of Christ;
2. A declaration regarding His ascension and its wonderful results.

1.

a. The admonition. V. 1. The congregation of Jehovah is addressed by the prophet with the summons to express its unbounded joy, the gesture spoken of being that of an exultation which can no longer be repressed. The shouting unto God is also an evidence of the joyful acclaim which Christians give to His majesty and glory.

b. How motivated. V. 2. The psalmist says that the Lord is terrible, that is, He is to be feared, to be regarded with awe and reverence. The joy of the believers is one which is connected with their proper appreciation of the Lord's position; it is one in which the rejoicing is combined with fear and trembling. Cp. Ps. 2, 11, 12. The joy of the believers is also brought about by the fact that their Messiah has power and dominion over all creatures, their particular

interest in Him being caused by His being the gracious Ruler of His Church.

c. The joy of the Christians on Ascension Day is connected with the Lord's promise. Vv. 3. 4. The Lord had promised the believers of old that He would subdue the people, that is, place many outside the Church in subjection to the Church by a spiritual victory, so that the vanquished would cheerfully join the ranks of the victors in giving honor and praise to the King. Another promise of God in the Old Testament was that in which He gave the blessing of His mercy to His children by faith, so that they might possess the excellency of Jacob, the bliss and joy of glorious perfection in heaven throughout eternity.

d. This indicates that the joy of the believers on Ascension Day is one of understanding. Vv. 6. 7 b. The psalmist urges the believers to sing hymns of joyful thanksgiving, and he identifies the God on high with Christ, the King of the Church. Understanding implies not only a proper professional skill in rendering the hymns, but also a proper appreciation of the fact that Jesus is God from eternity, the mighty Ruler of His Church.—This is the first part of the prophecy, with its powerful appeal to the believers to make the majesty and glory of Christ known throughout the world.

2.

The psalmist, having made his appeal to the believers, now continues with a wonderful declaration regarding the ascension of Christ and the further wonderful incidents resulting from this miracle.

a. The ascension itself is briefly described. V. 5. The psalmist says that God is gone up with a shout. He sees Christ as the Victor over all the enemies of all mankind ascend up to heaven in triumph. Shouting and the sound of the trumpet was always associated with joyful festivals, with the return of the victor. This is indicated also in the story of the ascension.

b. By His ascension Christ has given further evidence of the fact that He is the King of Glory. Vv. 7 a. 8 a. Jesus Christ, the God-man, by His ascension, by His marvelous exaltation, has shown Himself the King of all the earth. And the reign of the exalted Christ extends over the entire universe, His merciful and sheltering hand being extended over those who believe in Him as their Savior.

c. Christ is pictured as sitting at the right hand of Power. V. 8 b. He sitteth at the right hand of God, our Confession states. Even according to His human nature He has now assumed the full and unlimited use of the divine attributes communicated to Him. Eph. 1, 20.

d. And so the final result of His victorious ascension is the fact that people from all nations are gathered together unto Him. V. 9.

So great is the impression made by the proclamation of the victorious Christ that even the mighty ones of the earth join the nation of Abraham's God and become united with the spiritual Israel, with the Church of Christ. His victory is so great that all the enemies must lower their weapons before Him. He conquers with the power of His majestic mercy, through the Word of His grace. As a consequence and fruit of Christ's exaltation He is continually adding new members to the congregation of believers, from all nations and peoples of the world, all of whom unite in singing and praises, world without end.

K.

Sunday after Ascension (Exaudi).

Is. 55, 1—11.

In the course of the church-year we have had presented to us thus far the great facts of Christ's life and His redemptive work: Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Good Friday, Easter. We have just stood in spirit on the mountain as He raised His pierced hands in blessing and then ascended on high to take part in the glory and majesty and power of the Father also according to His human nature. — Thus the great wedding-feast had been prepared. Matt. 22, 1 ff. It was now in order to send out the invitation to the guests. Immediately preceding His ascension, Christ Himself had given His disciples the direction to begin this work. Matt. 28, 18 ff. — It is very appropriate, therefore, on this Sunday, following Ascension Day, to consider, on the basis of our text,

GOD'S GRACIOUS INVITATION TO MAN.

1. *The gracious invitation.*

Vv. 1—3; cp. Prov. 9, 5; John 7, 37; Rev. 22, 17. Living waters and the best and choicest food are mentioned. The Gospel feast is the most delightful and attractive of feasts. Matt. 22, 1—10. These verses dwell on the fulness and freeness of the invitation. Man's weakness, poverty, needs, are not reasons for staying away, but for coming. God offers everything the soul requires for health, strength, life. God wants to give it; He loves to do so.

The figures used are very apt. *Waters* depicts the fulness of the gifts which God pours out in the Gospel through His Holy Spirit, the river which makes glad the city of God, Ps. 46, 4; 65, 9 ff.; the fountain in the house of David, Zech. 13, 1; promised by Christ, John 4, 14. "Everything else in the world costs something, must be paid for in money or labor or in some act representing compensation for value received; only the mercies of David, the salvation in Christ, cost absolutely nothing." No money needed. The poorest sinner can have them for the taking. *Buy*, not pay a price, but obtain. *Eat*; cp. Ps. 22, 26; Is. 65, 13. Food and drink are essential for the

body; so are the spiritual blessings for the soul. *Wine and milk*, regarded as choicest articles of diet by the Jews, both satisfying and delicious, containing all elements necessary for nourishment. The blessings of the Gospel are fitted to nourish and support the soul, as well as to make it glad and cheerful.

"Why will ye *weigh* money," etc.? All earthly treasures are vanity as compared with those of the Gospel. Alexander conquered the world; but that did not satisfy his soul. Here is the only really satisfying possession. "Let your soul delight itself," etc., *i. e.*, in the richest food; cp. Gen. 27, 28—38; Job 36, 16; Ps. 65, 11; 63, 5; 36, 9. The spiritual blessings are boundless in their satisfying qualities. 1 Cor. 2, 9, 10. The soul never grows weary of them. (One of Trench's poems, "The Monk and the Bird," is the story of a monk who feared lest in heaven he would grow weary of the monotony of goodness and worship. One day, wandering in the woods, he heard a bird singing very charmingly and stopped to listen, as he thought, for a short hour. But on returning to the convent, he found that he had listened for two whole generations, and all the monks were now perfect strangers to him. So great are the delights of heaven, and also of the present union of the believer with Christ, which is a foretaste of heaven.)

Note the repetition of the invitation. God urges it. He does not desire the death of the wicked. The invitation should have man's full attention. Its promise is accentuated: "Your soul shall live." What a contrast to the word: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"! True life here and hereafter in intimate communion with God. "Everlasting covenant"; not the old, but the new covenant in Christ, Is. 61, 8; Jer. 32, 40; Ezek. 37, 26, which is sealed, not with the blood of bulls and goats, but with the precious blood of Christ, 1 Cor. 11, 25; Heb. 10, 16 ff. "The sure mercies of David"; all the grace and mercy and goodness promised to David, through the Messiah, are included in this covenant and affirmed. Acts 13, 32 ff.

Note also the word "Ho!" with which the invitation is introduced. According to the original it includes the thought: "Woe to those who do not follow this gracious invitation!" (Hymn 552, 4.) "Every one," Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, high and low. Matt. 22, 9; John 7, 37; Matt. 11, 28, etc.

2. *The One who gives the invitation.*

V. 4. A description of the Witness. No need to ask who He is. It can only be the Messiah. He is the true Witness, Rev. 1, 5; who testified to the truth, John 18, 37; in the days of His flesh; but also through His Spirit, John 15, 26, and through His ministers, v. 27; Acts 1, 8. He is Leader and Commander. Reference to His prophetic and kingly office. Heb. 2, 10; Ps. 193, 19; Matt. 2, 6; Acts 3, 15; Matt. 28, 18 ff. "One of the greatest needs of the human soul is a wise,

powerful Leader, an infallible Guide, and invincible King to lead us safely through this dangerous world to the final victory and reward."

V. 5. Christ, who calls His Church out of all nations, not only covenant people of the Old Testament. God has given them to Him. The crucified and exalted Christ draws them. "The purpose of God in sending the Messiah as His Witness is to procure for Him the honor and glory due Him as the King of this great, blessed, and eternal God. In giving to others the honor and beauty provided for them through the work of the Messiah, the Lord glorifies the Messiah Himself. The fact that believers are saved redounds to His glory." (*Kretzmann*.) — Some commentators prefer to apply this verse to the Church through which the Witness and Commander sends out the invitation. Zion, the Church, lifts up her voice and invites the nations. Acts 2, 39. They shall "run unto thee," enter the Church, because "of the Lord, thy God," the Messiah and Savior, whom the Church proclaims, and who hath "glorified the Church." Eph. 5, 25 ff.

3. When and how to accept the invitation. Vv. 6, 7.

The Lord is not far from us. Acts 17, 27, 28; Jer. 23, 23. He sends out the Gospel invitation throughout the world. He desires the conversion of the sinner. He wishes to be sought and is ready to be found. Jer. 29, 13, 14; Ps. 27, 4; 34, 4; 86, 5 ff.; Is. 65, 24. The best time to seek Him is in the day of grace; that is *now*. (Hymn 50.) Procrastination is dangerous. Felix, Acts 24, 25. "I may not pass this way again." Heb. 3, 8, 15; 2 Cor. 6, 2.

Seek Him in repentance and faith. There must be a forsaking of sin, turning from evil to God. Man cannot enter heaven encumbered with sin. "Let him return," etc. Who? The wicked and unrighteous man. Who are these? All men by nature. We have wandered away from God and righteousness. We must *come back*. By repentance and faith in Christ, through whom God is merciful. Thus we can accept the great invitation. Prodigal son, Paul, Peter, David.

"He will have mercy." This is a pledge and a promise. "Abundantly pardon." Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. "Pardon," from Latin *per*, through, thoroughly, perfectly, and *donare*, to give, present; hence, to give over completely the debt or penalty due; to treat a person as if he had not sinned. "Every one can be sunk out of sight in the infinite ocean of His love." Rom. 5, 20; Is. 1, 18; 1 Tim. 1, 13—17.

4. Reason for accepting the invitation.

a. God's readiness to forgive and receive, as we have noted in v. 7.

b. The richness and vastness of this mercy. Vv. 8, 9. "My thoughts," plans, purposes, views, ideas. Jer. 29, 11; Hos. 11, 8. Joseph and his brethren. Gen. 50, 20; Ps. 40, 5. "My ways." Ps. 25, 10; 103, 7—14. We should not judge God as to what He will do to the

sinner by what we see among men. How revengeful they are to those who have wronged them, how cruel to their enemies, how unforgiving of injuries, how slow to forget! V. 9 is a natural and beautiful illustration of the previous verse. As the depths of His wisdom, so the heights of His grace are unsearchable.

c. The certainty of God's promises. Vv. 10, 11. Hearts of men by nature are what the earth would be without the rains of heaven — barren, sterile. But God promises that His words shall accomplish results similar to those effected by rain and snow. Threefold effect of rain and snow: watereth, maketh it to bring forth, and bud. This the Gospel does in the hearts of men. Col. 1, 10, 6; 2 Pet. 1, 8; Titus 3, 14; Acts 7, 17; 2 Pet. 3, 18.

Conclusion. — Have you accepted this gracious invitation? The Lord calls and invites you again to-day. Your Lord and Savior shed His blood for *you* in order that you might be saved. Repent and accept Him and be blest for time and eternity! You who have accepted, remember what a privilege it is that as members of His Church you may help in the great work of missions, at home and abroad, in order that others may hear the same sweet Gospel and come to the knowledge of their Savior. Let this gracious invitation inspire and encourage you to renewed efforts for His kingdom. Rejoice in a Savior who is so good, so merciful, so ready to pardon and receive. (Hymn 479, 3 ff.)

W. G. P.

Literatur.

The Book of Job. Its Significance to Ministers and Church-members.

Paper read at the convention of the California and Nevada District of the Missouri Synod in the year 1921. By *L. Fuerbringer*. Done into English by *E. H. Paar*. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. Price, 85 cts.

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We have here on 250 pages the version in English of the proceedings of our Synod at its last triennial sessions. A carefully prepared index covers two pages.

Register zum „Magazin für ev.-luth. Homiletik und Pastoraltheologie“. Deutsch-englische Monatschrift. Jahrgang 39—50. Bearbeitet von C. E.hardt. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. Preis: 75 Cts. netto.

Unser „Homiletisches Magazin“ hat Freunde auch außerhalb unsers Kreises gewonnen. Wir wissen nach langjährigem Gebrauch, daß es solcher Freundschaft wert ist, und sind denen dankbar, die uns so viele schätzenswerte Dienste durch ihre Beiträge für dasselbe geleistet haben. Ebenso haben wir je und je viel Anregung im ersten Registerband, Jahrgang 1—38, gefunden. Darum schätzen wir auch die treue Arbeit P. Ehardt's bei der Herstellung dieses zweiten Registerbandes sehr hoch ein. Dieser neue Band umfaßt zwölf Jahrgänge. Und was für eine Fülle nützlicher Winke ist auf seinen 48 Seiten zusammengehäuft! Abgesehen von den vielen verschiedenen Gelegenheitspredigten und -ansprachen, zu denen Themata geboten werden, bietet der neue Band solche nicht bloß zu den altkirchlichen Episteln und Evangelien, sondern auch zu den Eisenacher Evangelien und zu verschiedenen Serien, die von der Synodalkonferenz im Jahre 1912 approbiert worden sind. Ebenso ist eine Reihe Themata in englischer Sprache darin zu finden, die zu Predigten über die sechs Hauptstücke des Katechismus sich eignen. Serien über Josua, Elias, Elisa, Esther und Hiob und andere sind auch verzeichnet. Kurz und gut, wer aus der Fülle des hier gebotenen Materials nichts Geeignetes finden könnte, dem wüßten wir nicht zu raten und zu helfen.

Hymns for Synodical Conventions, Pastors' and Teachers' Conferences, Circuit Meetings, and Similar Occasions. Selected by Prof. L. Fuerbringer, D. D. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. Price: English-German edition, 5 cts. each; 100, \$2.50; English edition, 5 cts. each; 100, \$2.25.

Two separate collections of hymns are here offered, in an English-German and in an English edition, the former of which contains 24 hymns; the latter, 12. Our hospitable congregations, which have so generously provided for the comforts of their guests during meetings, as described in the title, will surely welcome this booklet of hymns, because past experiences have proved that for more reasons than one a lack of necessary hymn-books was sorely felt.

Von der Finsternis zum Licht. Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben. Von D. C. M. J.orn. Preis: 35 Cts.

Allerlei aus Gottes Garten. Gotteslehren in kurzer Form. Von D. C. M. J.orn. Preis, gebunden: 90 Cts.

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